



Some of the first Witzenberg club members.

Witzenberg Photographic Society

The club with the youthful profile

The founding of the Witzenberg Photographic Society in August 2020 was precipitated by an article in the Witzenberg Herald about the photography of Wolseley resident and veteran photographer Phillip de Lange.

Because this generated so much interest from readers who were keen to learn more about photography, Suzaan Opperman suggested that they form a club in the area. Phillip and her husband Gerrit, who used to belong to Worcester Photographic Club, immediately embraced the idea and on 2 September 2020 the Witzenberg Photographic Society had its first meeting at the Ceres Transport Riders Museum.

Phillip's wife Louise and Trevor Felix were also members of the first committee.

When the club was registered on Photo Vault Online in August 2020, it already had nine members.

Another article in the Witzenberg Herald about the formation of the club generated further interest from photographers as far as Cape Town and Worcester. When the first competition evening was held on 8 October 2020, twenty members attended (see above) – despite COVID scaring many people from attending meetings – and 74 images were entered. They had 21 signed-up members at that stage.

“To our surprise we were contacted by a member of the Ceres Fotografiese Vereniging, which showed slides only and closed 42 years ago (in 1978),” says Phillip. “They donated the floating trophy that the club used years ago to us.”



Committee members Gerrit Opperman and Louise de Lange with the first chairman, Phillip de Lange.



During the following three years Witzenberg managed to retain this number of members, according to their report to the PSSA Regional Director at the beginning of 2024. Several of these club members are scholars from the Charlie Hofmeyr High School in Ceres, which affiliated with the Witzenberg club under Phillip's guidance, and Western Cape Youth Photographers, which offers a home to scholars whose schools don't have photographic clubs. Many of these youngsters have grown into noteworthy photographers who have won international and local salon and competition medals and compete successfully with adults in monthly PSSA competitions and on the PSSA Impala Log. Subsequently, Witzenberg also helped the Aristeia primary school and some of these young photographers also became award winners locally and internationally.

Witzenberg Photographic Society salon, hosted in 2021 shortly after the club's founding, attracted a very admirable number of entrants – more than 5 000! This placed the club on a sound financial footing. A popular feature of this salon, and the salons hosted in subsequent years, was that they offered two print sections each. When a salon slot became available in 2023, Witzenberg secured it for their satellite club, Western Cape Youth Photographers.

Phillip de Lange, who is the PSSA National Director responsible for Youth, has a long and memorable history as a photographer and club administrator. He was elected to the PSSA Board in 2022, where he assists with updating the Impala Log, keeping track of disqualifications in salons and serving as a member of the Youth portfolio.



Seven of the Top ten Youth Photographers for 2023 were Witzenberg members. Photo: Phillip de Lange.



In the beginning of 2024, he was appointed chairperson of the PSSA Youth portfolio.

Phillip (left) is a photographic club veteran in Gauteng as well as the Western Cape. He was chairman of the F-Stop Camera Club in Kempton Park and was also a member of Edenvale Photographic Club and Benoni Camera Club in Gauteng. In 1994 he was awarded the PSSA Meritorious Service Award by the F-Stop club. After he was transferred to the Western Cape, Phillip and his wife, Louise, joined Swartland Photographic Society in 1996 (to 2000) and rejoined in 2013. They also joined the Worcester club and in 2019 became members of Tafelberg Fotografieklub in Bellville, where they remained members after they founded the Witzenberg club.

Phillip is an accomplished photographer who earned APSSA for colour slides in 1996. As a successful salon entrant he earned DPSSA(Vers) in 2022 and DPSSA(Cls) in 2023. He earned the AFI-AP Distinction for 40 international salon acceptances in 2021.

He has been director, or helped organise, several salons for clubs in the Western Cape. Phillip qualified as a JAP accredited judge in 2013 and he offers support and tuition to photographers who are keen to improve their skills. He also promoted partnerships between schools and photographic clubs to grow youth membership. He assists scholars from across the country to set up PhotovaultOnline profiles and encourages them to enter youth salons, the PSSA Youth Division monthly website competition and international salons and competitions. His encouragement made a huge contribution to the excellent performances of our youth members in international salons and competitions.

